

VZCZCXRO3980
PP RUEHFK
DE RUEHKO #2635 1350235
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 150235Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2004
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 6172
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 9378
RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2229
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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OITP KMDR KPAO JA

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IRAN - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: A front-page poll in Monday morning's business daily Nihon Keizai showed that about 33 percent of respondents expressed support for current Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe as Japan's next prime minister. The poll, conducted nationwide May 12-14, also showed 21 percent support for former Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda.

¶1. "Iranian Nuclear Issue: Tehran Needs to Make Wise Decision" The moderate Tokyo Shimbun editorialized (5/15): "Work will soon get underway on drafting a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution regarding Iran's nuclear development. Although the US and European nations are still at odds with China and Russia over the issue, all parties are calling on Tehran to cease uranium enrichment. Iran should heed the international call and make a wise decision that will allow it to acquire nuclear technology for civilian use. The five permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany will shortly hold a high-level meeting in London to coordinate views on a resolution. The six countries have already agreed in principle that Iran will receive technology for civilian nuclear development if it halts uranium enrichment and that if it refuses, diplomatic measures will be taken, possibly including sanctions. Difficult negotiations are expected between the Western nations and the China-Russia bloc over what specific measures will be taken.

¶2. "Nevertheless, we hope the six nations will stand firm on the principle of preventing nuclear proliferation and clearly demonstrate a concerted effort to enact a resolution at an early date. A united front is indispensable to persuade Iran to halt its nuclear development.... If the Ahmadinejad regime continues with its hard-line policy on nuclear development, tensions in the Middle East and Gulf region are bound to escalate,

creating long-term instability. Tehran should fully recognize that it is standing on a precipice.... There has been no formal dialogue between the US and Iran since the two nations severed diplomatic relations in 1980.... But calls are rising in the US for Washington to start talking directly with Tehran. The leaders of the two nations need to give serious consideration to such calls."

DONOVAN